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Pat Quinn, Governor
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IDNR, Fox Waterway Agency Announce Cooper Farms “Mud to Parks” Facility

Project will help maintain Chain O’ Lakes while providing high-quality topsoil for parks, construction projects, area residents

FOX LAKE, IL – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Fox Waterway Agency today announced development of the Cooper Farms sediment dewatering site that will allow reuse of tens of thousands of tons of eroded topsoil from Wisconsin and northeast Illinois that settles in the Fox River and Chain O’ Lakes annually.

Partial funding for the \$880,000 project comes from the Illinois’ Mud to Parks program supported by capital bond funds. Governor Pat Quinn has been a longtime advocate of the Mud to Parks program – supporting Illinois’ first Mud to Parks project taking Illinois River sediment from the Peoria Lake to help develop a new park on Chicago’s south side in 2003.

“Having this reusable dewatering site will help promote the worthwhile reuse of rich soil that has ended up in the waterway, while ensuring that these lakes and channels are dredged and maintained for public access and recreation within the Chain,” said IDNR Director Marc Miller. “The Mud to Parks concept is a winner – getting eroded mud out of the waterway and putting that valuable Illinois and Wisconsin topsoil to good use throughout the region.”

With more than 60,000 tons of eroded soil and farmland from the Fox River basin ending up in the waterway and Chain O’Lakes each year, the Cooper Farms soils farm site will store and allow the drying of the dredged sediment for later reuse. Removing the material from the Chain will improve the water quality of the lakes, help restore navigability for boaters and increase recreational opportunities, and enhance nearby property values. The sediment dewatering site is located northeast of Grass Lake and west of Lake Marie, on a parcel managed by Chain O’Lakes State Park.

“Especially in this economy, the State of Illinois has given us a tremendous opportunity to create a source of revenue by reclaiming lake bottom that we would normally have to pay to get rid of,” said Executive Director Ingrid Danler. “It will allow us to self-fund projects in the future, rather than using tax dollars or user fees, and we appreciate the foresight of the State of Illinois in recognizing this opportunity.”

Topsoil is a valuable commodity for construction and landscaping projects. The dewatering facility will include two earthen cells or holding tanks that will store the wet or muddy dredged material – and a sediment recovery and recycling area. The reclaimed topsoil will be sold to area businesses and individuals for use in parks, recreation facilities, construction projects, and landscaping. Funds generated by the sale of the reclaimed soil can support the cost of maintaining and operating the facility.

For more information on the Fox Waterway Agency please visit www.foxwaterway.org